1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
Mirebalais

important point in the warfare between the northern Empire of Christophe and the southern Republic of Pétion is well known, since the boundary between the two, never definitely fixed, might be roughly considered as the Artibonite, control of which, as always, depended on also obtaining control of the strategic hills about the town.[11] It is not possible to discover more than approximate figures for the population of Mirebalais at the present time, since no census of the district has been made, and the most recent figure of 51,000 for the commune is derived from the baptismal records in the parish church.[12]

From the earliest years of settlement of the valley, the town has been the center of its life. The government of the commune is located here; here the courts sit; and here the best schools and the only church of the district are found. Yet it is a small town, numbering less then two hundred and fifty houses, and crossed by but three principal thoroughfares stretching north and south, with ten or twelve cross-lanes. The houses on the principal streets, rectangular and small, are built of wood, plastered over with clay, painted, and roofed with sheet iron. On the outskirts of the town the roofing is of straw, or banana-leaf thatch, while the walls themselves are made of twilled wythes. No house lacks its veranda, however small, where people may be seen sitting late of an afternoon and early in the evening, but the life of the women is lived chiefly in the courtyards behind these houses that line the streets, where the cookhouses are found and the storehouses, and where all work is done. The *place*, or town square, lies at the point where the principal route between Port-au-Prince and the Dominican border turns sharply to the east. Consisting of an acre or two of cleared land, it is overgrown with weeds except when, in preparing for festive occasions, the prisoners from the town jail may be seen spending long hours, machetes in hand, cutting the grass, a few blades at a time. North of the square stands the church, a substan-

1: Herskovits E-4,5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
Mirebalais

North of the Grave stands the church, a substantial structure with rounded arches in the Roman style, roofed over, like most other buildings, with galvanized iron. Other public buildings are the town hall — the Mairie — and the "Hall of Justice"; near by are the stone walls of a public building begun some years ago as a school, but destined apparently to house what is known as the "Bureau of Contributions," a euphemism for the tax-collector's quarters. Despite the fact that Mirebalais was one of the most difficult regions for the American occupation to subdue during the Caco uprising of 1918–20,[19] it was one of the first districts where the Guarde d'Haiti was completely Haitianized, and from which all American Marine officers were withdrawn. Only a small detachment is stationed there at present. Its well-kept barracks are near the church, and the prisons form a part of the same compound, from whence issue daily the striped-suited prisoners, men and women, under guard or alone on parole, who do communal work in the town and the near-by countryside.

The town awakens at dawn to the chattering of domesticated guinea-fowl and the crowing of cocks. Occasionally a camion rumbles through the principal thoroughfare; more rarely an automobile dashes by in great clouds of dust on its way to Las Cahobas, or Hinche, or Santo Domingo City. If it is a market day, the streets are early filled with country folk on their way to dispose of their produce, and the clatter from the market place behind the church is heard everywhere until the heat of the day brings a lull to all commerce, and drowsiness once more settles over everything. By mid-afternoon during the planting season, drums can be heard over the countryside. The sounds are not those of the "throbbing" vodun drums — though they have more than once been mistaken for them by travelers — but they set the rhythm for the communal work of the *combites*, which perform cooperative agricultural labor. As the rapid dusk follows the disappearance of the sun behind the mountains, the voices of

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
Miveblalab

3142

ABOVE, *A country dwelling.*
BELOW, *A combite at work.*

[facing p. 11]

1: Herskovits E-4,5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3

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affable, generous perhaps to the point of ostentation, confident, brave, a sure friend and a good father" [38] — such are his good points as set down by one who was perhaps surer-eyed than others in seeing his deficiencies, though these traits seem to have concerned more his relations with his fellow-whites than those which affected his bearing toward his Negro slaves.

The young Créole women of this same environment were destined for early marriage — too early for their best development, whether physical or mental. Given to exacting the fulfillment of their slightest caprices, they were, like their men, creatures of passion. If they survived their first pregnancies, which as a result of too early marriages often came before they were physically in condition to support the rigors of childbirth, they soon lost their youthful allure and became the unattractive women of the type so maliciously described by the Comte de C***.[39] In such cases they frequently survived not one but several husbands. Their associations were chiefly with their Negro women slaves, who were full confidantes, sleeping in the same chamber with their mistresses and on occasion sharing informal meals with them, though they never ate at the same table. And because, by a fine turn of irony, these Negro women were often at the same time the concubines of the husbands, brothers, or sons of their mistresses, they were as often as not treated alternately with the greatest tenderness and the harshest brutality.[40]

Whatever the inner life of white Haitians, native-born or Créole, outward ostentation was the rule. In the cities poorly furnished houses were cared for by a numerous retinue of uniformed retainers; "the supreme achievement for a European being to have himself served, he hires slaves while he waits for the time when he can own them."[41] In the country, too, life was lived on as lavish a scale as possible. This is not the place to describe the houses of masters and slaves, or the buildings needed for working sugar-cane or indigo or preparing coffee, or their distribution over the plantation, for no-

J. Herskovits E-4, 8 (1934) 1937 SV3 Hait SV3

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175 merous contemporary accounts, and most present-day works,
105 give both texts and illustrations which make the economy of
563 the plantation clear.[33] Though many stories of the magnifi-
567 cence of plantation life are found in current works, writers
342 of the period seem to agree that but little attention was paid
to convenience. Inventories of the contents of houses show
175 that furnishings were at a minimum; a few chairs and small
105 tables in the sitting- and reception-rooms, beds and minor ac-
563 cessories in the way of furniture in the bedrooms, dining-room
352 tables and chairs and a cabinet for dishes. These pieces were
usually built in the colony and made of native hard woods;
substantial, they were essentially plain. As Baron Wimpffen
remarked, "Taste, Sir, is still Creolian at Saint Domingo; and,
unfortunately, the Creolian is not the right taste, — it smells
too much of the *Boucan*."[34]

175 The table set was not distinguished. Meat, though the most
105 important dish at the principal meals, was poor, but, on the
563 other hand, fish, game, and wild fowl were excellent, and the
567 best of French wines were available.[35] Whatever the fare, how-
352 ever, it was served in the grand manner, often on plate rather
than chinaware, and by the many liveried house-servants
which every great establishment could boast. An account of
the mode of service has been preserved in the reminiscences
of one who, writing some years later of a repast served him in
1787, says: "There were many more of these domestics of both
sexes than there were diners. I could but admire their atten-
tion to the smallest details of the service, the whiteness of their
clothing, and the beautiful kerchiefs in the Créole manner
elegantly arranged about the heads of the women. . . . But
[291] all of them moved about on bare feet; this was the distinctive
sign of slavery."[36]

175 As portrayed in contemporary works, Haitian white life is
181 seen to have been lived entirely in terms of material goods and
105 of display. Just as there was little intellectual life, so religion
921 was but a matter of form. One M. de Larnage, writing from
563

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1936) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
Mirabelais

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CHAPTER XIII

AFRICA AND EUROPE IN HAITIAN LIFE

With the historical background of Haitian culture and its present-day organization in mind, we may now seek to disentangle the varied sources from which the institutions described in the preceding pages have been derived. The formalized expressions of religion will be treated in the chapter which follows; here the manner in which Europe and Africa have determined the forms of other phases of Haitian peasant life will be analyzed. 121

Even such a simple aspect of peasant life as the house, or *caille*, as it is termed, furnishes an illustration of this intermingling of cultures. In the countryside the typical dwelling is a rectangular structure of two rooms with a thatched gabled roof and walls of woven withes daubed with mud.[1] The rectangular floor plan and the roof are of West African type, but since both of these are also familiar in Europe, the house thus probably represents the coalescence of two dwelling forms which were originally not strikingly unlike each other. The type of thatching is purely African, as is the wall construction, for walls of twilled withes can be seen in West Africa today. On the other hand, what there is of furniture is entirely European. The African stool has given way to the 342 191 358 197

1: Herskovits E-4, 8 (1936) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3 Mirebalais

European straight chair, and if peasants often sleep on mats laid on the ground in African fashion, this is only because their resources do not permit them the luxury of beds. The accessory field-house is called an *ajupa*, a designation which represents one of the few recognizable contributions of the aboriginal inhabitants of the island to its present-day culture, since, according to Charlevoix,[3] it was first applied to the huts of the buccaneers, called by them *aioupas*, a name taken over from the Spaniards, who themselves had adapted it from the native Indian term.

Clothing is also of European style. The men, who wear shirt and trousers, long ago discarded the West African loincloth and the covering great-cloth worn toga-fashion, while the hats they wear are of course equally of European type. The absence of shoes, though characteristic of Africa, is not necessarily of significance, for shoes are not only an accepted article of dress, but are symbols of worldliness, and when lacking from the costume, indicate only an inability to purchase them. The dress of women is no less European, though only the old women continue the fashions of the days of St. John, who reported that "the females generally keep to a long white chemise, covered over with a blue cotton dress that reaches to their bare feet, and is drawn in around the waist."[4] As in his time, white is favored for days of festivity, and the head-kerchief is also seen, even if it is less omnipresent than in his day. The younger women who count themselves sophisticated scorn the kerchiefs and wear hats, but elderly women wind white kerchiefs about their heads in the West African manner. The invariable mark of the *mambo*, in addition to her jeweled fingers, is the white kerchief with a very large straw hat worn over it.

One special form of dress that represents a complex merging of European and African secular and religious customs is the *vade de pénitence*. For men this takes the form of a multi-colored shirt, for women a dress whose colors are dictated by

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1936) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
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to the Haitian *baka* found in the New World are the *bakru* of Dutch Guiana, who in turn derive from the "little folk" of West African belief, beings that are always important in making magic. See Herskovits, M. and F. (IV), 105–7.

[10] Dorsainvil (I), 150, mentions this rite.

[11] Notably by Seabrook, 92 ff., who made great capital of the concept and purported actually to have seen these beings! Parsons (II), ii, 392, Tale 77, I, reproduces a Haitian's account in Créole of how a Sorcerer goes about ensnaring a victim to make of him a zombi.

[12] Parsons (I), 178–9.

CHAPTER XIII

[1] Price-Mars (II), 96 ff., gives a detailed description of the peasant house. The beehive-shaped hut mentioned by Craige, 56, is not found in Mirebalais, though the valley is but a short distance from Hinche, of which he was writing. Seabrook, 18, also describes the interior of a peasant house.

[2] Charlevoix, ii, 42.

[3] St. John, 135.

[4] Seabrook, 104 ff., devotes some space to a discussion of *privitorce*, but so changes its meaning to the Haitians that it is quite useless in making a serious comparison of data.

[5] See the discussion in Dorsainvil (I), 150, concerning other recreations of African more behavior in Haiti.

[6] Craige, Seabrook, and Wiekan, all give lively accounts of cock-fights.

[7] Cf. Price-Mars (I), 1–15, for accounts of the manner in which stories are told in Haiti. It is to be noted that the African belief that a tale must not be told during the daytime persists there.

[8] A large collection of Haitian folk-tales has been published recently by Parsons (II), ii, 470–598.

[9] Audain has published what is perhaps the largest collection of Créole proverbs; his work, however, is unfortunately out of print.

CHAPTER XIV

[1] Dorsainvil (I), 158.

[2] Exceptions to this statement must be made in the case of the careful study of the relationship between Catholicism and voudou by Price

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
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any usual measure. But Haitians do produce by traditional craft methods a surprisingly large number of the articles they need for daily life. In the countryside it is possible to see many persons engaged, mostly on a part-time basis, in craft activities and home industry that have their roots in the prerevolutionary era. Leatherworkers operating small, crude tanneries still flourish. Charcoal-burners, and operators of small lime kilns that produce building material, are found in every village. Smiths make and repair simple tools, working with forges of archaic design. Combs are made from cows' horns and tortoiseshell, buttons from bone; carrying-bags, fish traps, and a wide variety of baskets from withes, bamboo strips, and grasses; wooden bowls, mortars and pestles, tool handles and spoons from local woods; dippers, pots, and candelabra from tin cans; and sandals from tires and inner tubes. Sawyers cut and dress timber; cabinetmakers still manufacture simple furniture of traditional design from the fast-disappearing tropical woods; many women, working either with the simplest sorts of sewing machines or by hand, make clothing for use and for sale. Along the coasts there are dugout-makers, shipbuilders, and sail- and seine-makers. Simple mattresses, fabricated from local grasses, are sold in every large marketplace, as are crude ceramic wares made by local potters. At the start of the twentieth century, Italian immigrants brought a sturdy tradition of cobbling to Haiti, which has been destroyed only recently by the flood of American imported shoes with their attached prestige, until recently, *ritalie* was a colloquial term for shoe, coming from the name of the most famous of these Italian cobblers.

One of the striking features of Haiti's craft traditions is its relative stability since the revolution. It was under slavery that Haitians first became "westernized," learning what were then standard French craft practices, adjusted to local colonial conditions, probably with some modifying features coming from the African past. It was before the revolution that the Haitian people learned and stabilized their consumer tastes, agricultural and craft standards, and work procedures. Such preferences and standards were worked out primarily in terms of the demands of the plantation regime itself; but even the most repressive social system leaves some opportunity for acculturation. Today's sugar-making shops and rural rum distilleries employ techniques centuries old and little modified over time. Housebuilding and woodworking techniques in the countryside are substantially

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
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342 322 178 unchanged from an earlier era. The prevailing quality of Haitian rural and craft industry, then, is one of great stability and conservatism.

493 463 At the same time, of course, major events since the revolution have left their imprint on this part of life. Hardly a roadside village in Haiti today, for instance, lacks an automobile mechanic, even though these men are mostly self-educated and work with hardly any tools. Their skills became part of Haitian culture in this century and are often of a simple order no longer typical of more developed areas. Tire tubes, for instance, are "vulcanized" by the use of an ingenious device made from a board and an old piston, kerosene providing the heat to make the seal; this technique, along with the sewing of damaged truck tires, was almost certainly introduced and diffused by the United States Marines.

383 177

47 51 178 But these quaint additions do not alter the fact that shop and factory industry are nearly absent, and extractive industry virtually nonexistent. Haiti's one alumina extraction enterprise, foreign-owned, is now shut down. There is but one flour mill, and that is foreign-owned as well. One or two textile mills and sugar factories, established with foreign capital, still function, as do a modern cement factory and a few other small plants established in the 1930s. These industries, scanty as they are, were of great importance to Haiti, since they represented substantial investments, held out the promise of reduced dependence on imports in significant categories, and contributed to the beginnings of an industrial proletariat. However, they involved only a tiny fraction of the national labor force, and they have not proved entirely successful. As a result, Haiti lacks any reserve of labor acquainted with modern industry, even though many people, both urban and rural, work at tasks that might be considered more industrial than agricultural.

[253] [359] [464]

47 433 178 178 Most important for the present discussion, the minor developments in Haitian industry have not led to an expanded market and have not resulted in any firm increase in productivity. Industrial growth, in the sense in which it has occurred in countries such as those of Western Europe—or for that matter in Mexico or Argentina—is entirely lacking. The absence of such growth is perhaps especially significant if Haiti be compared with a neighbor such as Jamaica or Puerto Rico. These countries, one now independent, the other a North American dependency—have both gained real increments from the investment activities of outsiders.

[648]

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
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family on an average, at 5 persons, husband, wife, and three children, we arrive at the conclusion, that the head of every third family in the state is engaged in cultivating his own freehold; a proportion of independent proprietors, such as perhaps scarcely any other country in the world can exhibit. The number of acres cultivated by these small proprietors, varies from 9 to 30; many of them keep horses, cows, and goats: they raise sufficient provisions of the bread kind, such as yams, plantains, and bananas, for the main support of their families; they kill hogs for meat, and they dispose of their coffee, cotton, hemp, castor oil, and fruit, at the public market for money, to purchase clothing, furniture, and other necessaries. The houses they live in, though poorly furnished, are decent habitations; and many of them have gardens attached, neatly fenced in with bamboos, or with logwood, or aloe hedges.[10]

If these figures are even approximately accurate, the majority of the people of Haiti had not yet become peasants in the sense of being landowners, for in the statement cited only a third of the people owned their land. Another large group, however, possibly a third of the population, were squatters, living on land which technically belonged to someone else but from which they were never ejected. The remaining third, excluding the town and village dwellers, were in the intermediate stage between hirelings and peasants. Some worked for a given rate of wages, but the larger number worked for shares of the produce on the land of large proprietors.

The crop-sharing system (Americans of the twentieth century call it share-cropping) of the 'thirties and 'forties was an economic but temporary adjustment worked out in perfect disregard of the Code Rural. In general, two arrangements prevailed. By one the laborers worked in return for half the total produce of the estate, raising food for themselves in gardens provided by the owner; under the other they worked for a quarter of the produce, the proprietor guaranteeing to keep them in provisions. There was no general concurrence in Haiti at the time as to which plan was the more economical to the laborer and his family. Certainly both schemes were prejudicial to large crops of coffee and sugar, and therefore to the economic prosperity of the proprietors and the state; since this was so, the crop-sharing expedient was short-lived. Workers participating in it lived in the huts and cabins which, under the old régime, had been inhabited by their slave ancestors. As these fell to pieces others, cheaper and less soundly built, were constructed to take their place.

The crop-sharing system, economically debilitating though it was,

10. Ibid.

3: Leyburn Z-4,5 (no date) 1966
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parents are generally kind to their children, so far as physical
855 punishment is concerned. The average peasant child can hardly
861 properly be said to be "brought up": he merely grows, eats whatever
his family eats or whatever fruits he can pick up, and learns his place
152 in the community as he matures. In anger, parents are likely to use
in correction the first thing that comes to hand. There is a surprising
callousness to pain among these generally kindly people: they beat
their donkeys unmercifully, and strap harness over open sores; they
carry chickens, head down and feet tied together and mouths gaping,
for miles in the sun; they revel in gory cockfights. If, therefore, a
parent is minded to beat his child, he will probably do a thorough
[578] job of it. A peasant woman, pummeling her son with a broomstick,
replied to the protests of a white passer-by, "*Li nègue; li pas fait li mal.*"
("He's a Negro; it won't hurt him.") The interference of a stranger
in the beating of a wife by her man, armed with a club, was resented
by both man and woman as an interference with a purely family
quarrel.

831 The concept of sexual continence is lacking among the peasants.
839 Sex, indeed, hardly enters the realm of morality except in connection
854 with adulterous dalliance of one man with another's woman. There
is no virtue in abstaining from sex relations when the sexual urge is
strong. Mothers tell love stories in all their frank details to their
young daughters, and some who care about such matters are adept
in all lore connected with stimulating and satisfying a man's desire.[1]
•[342] Since huts are small and the whole family sleeps in the same room,
children have ample opportunity to observe the sexual life of their
parents. If a girl, as a result of her own experiments, has a child born
to her, there is no disgrace. Practically every peasant is "illegitimate,"
so that the term means nothing; a baby will there be old enough to
assist in the work of the home, thus becoming an asset. It is expected
that as soon as a youth grows up he will find a mate and begin a
family of his own.

241 The family is as important an element of peasant life as formal
939 marriage is unimportant. It is the economic unit. Ever since the days
573 of Pétion Haitian economy has been one of small things: even the
crops are small subsistence crops of maize, millet, beans, rice, yams,
and frequently trees of bananas, plantains, and coffee, which require
no particular cultivation. Enough coffee has been produced in Haiti
for annual export ever since 1804, but until recent years the beans

1. See Zora Neale Hurston, *Tell My Horse*, pp. 22 ff.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
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Any forces who possible psychological reasons is guesswork. It

might be hazarded that the men felt they had fought for freedom and so deserved to enjoy its benefits; or that agriculture smacked of the old days of slavery and should be avoided by the superior male; or that since ambition for progress was not a Haitian characteristic, and the work of women produced enough food, there was no reason to change a routine which did very well. One cannot speak with definiteness on these matters. And it was upper-class Haitians and foreigners who adjudged peasant men lazy; slaves and "forced" laborers always appear lazy to their masters.

In modern times at least, male peasants toil strenuously, although not so continuously as their females. The preparation of the ground for planting is hard work, and is done entirely by men. Harvesting, housebuilding, marketing the coffee (one form of marketing not beneath a man's dignity)—these are men's major contributions to economic life.

People who live in isolation commonly tend to slide back in such externalities as clothes, manners, neatness of person and of dwelling, speech, and social ritual. Almost from the very beginning of Haitian history, most of the people were effectively isolated from the rest of the world, so that the superficial aspects of daily life exhibited to all visitors the spectacle of retrogression.

Christophe, who had frequent English visitors in his kingdom, forced his subjects to dress neatly. After his time no ruler made regulations for dress. The men commonly wore a pair of cotton trousers and an abbreviated shirt, while women's dress was a loose-flowing garment which might be called a Mother Hubbard. Children could, and can now, be seen up to the age of four or five without any clothes at all. The nearer the countrypeople live to towns, where the example of the elite is before them, the better their dress is likely to be.

Slave cabins on the former plantations were inhabited by the free Haitians until decay set in and the cabins fell down. They were ordinarily superseded by huts which could be constructed of withes and thatch. The British Minister during the eighteen-twenties saw a man near Plaisance building his house, "plastering the wattling, of which the walls were composed, with a mixture of mud and ashes," using his hand as a trowel.[18] Almost never did a hut have more than

18. Mackenzie, op. cit., I, 150.

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two rooms to house the whole family. "In these huts, filth and every species of uncleanliness prevail, for the people give themselves up to their indolent and lazy habits. It is common to see the pigs and poultry herding with the family."[19]

The furnishings in the huts were as simple as the construction. Rarely was there more than one bed, if that; the children of the family used mats for sleeping. A table, a stool, a couple of patched chairs, calabash bowls, an iron pot or two (and in later days, discarded gasoline tins), comprise the household equipment.

The fine roads of the French régime became rutted and washed, were overgrown with weeds, and soon reverted to wasteland or became nothing more than paths. Carriages ceased to be of any use, and there were few wagons; donkeys and horses became the regular means of transportation, and this was true until the Americans began to build roads again in 1916. The colonial régime had left a legacy of bridges, public buildings, parks, irrigation ditches; practically every improvement of this nature crumbled in slow decay and was not replaced. The temperate Dr. Brown closed his account of the Haiti of 1836 with the following paragraph:

> To sum up all that might be said upon the actual condition of Hayti, poverty and degradation stare one in the face wherever he goes—and the state of the whole island will be fully understood in the United States when it is bluntly asserted, that the country is one continuous negro village, built of mud cabins, and unfurnished with the usual comforts of life. The population is, with small exceptions, an indolent, naked multitude, without sustenance or a disposition to make exertions to obtain it; without enormous vices, but petty and insignificant in every thing relating to human character, and not many removes from the tribes upon the Niger in point of civilization. The fact is indisputable, that as a nation the blacks of Saint Domingo are in a retrograde movement as regards intellectual improvement, and no obstacle seems to exist to prevent this descent to barbarism. The government and institutions of the country must for the present remain unstable, and it is difficult to pronounce what the changes involved in the future will produce.[20]

Progress, as Westerners understand it, comes through contacts and competition, both of which were lacking to Haiti in large measure throughout the whole of the nineteenth century. While externally

19. Franklin, *op. cit.*, p. 296.
20. *Op. cit.*, II, 288–289.

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to regard the people as neighbors, their first impression is generally their abiding one.

And yet the land has its memorable beauties. To lie at anchor in the harbor at Port-au-Prince early in the morning and watch the long arm of the southern peninsula turn gradually from purple vagueness to brilliant green as the sun rises back of the capital; to see a tiny ship with its patched and colored sail glide quietly by on its way out to the island of La Gonâve, lying twenty miles to the west, like a morsel about to be swallowed by the open jaws of the "mainland"; to hear the morning noises drifting across the water, with a snatch of song or laughter in the air; to watch Port-au-Prince come to life, white and sparkling as the sun strikes it—this is the proper introduction to Haiti. Beyond the capital are the hills and mountains; if one will take the time, he may look back as he climbs and see not only the whiteness of the city, but the gracious sweep of the harbor, and the peninsula losing itself in the western distance. He will think without apology of a lesser Naples, and will not miss Vesuvius. Within the country is every variety of scenery: high mountains whose peaks are frequently shrouded in misty clouds; ranges of lower mountains ("*morne*" is the eloquent Haitian name for them) which can be melancholy, kindly, or forbidding, as the spirit of the traveler wills; dull wastes of salt marshes; arid deserts where cactus grows, spiked and hairy, to enormous heights; canyons, waterfalls, dried-up streams; moors, little jungles, farms; rich plantations of sugar cane, dusty stretches of sheer barrenness—everything, in fact, from majesty to complete insipidity. Rarely can one find such utter diversity in a small space as in Haiti. One might fancy himself successively on Egdon Heath, in an Arizona desert, among the Dakota Bad Lands, in old Saint-Domingue, in tropical Africa, in the Pyrenees.

The sad truth remains: nothing that man has done in Haiti for a century and a quarter has been worthy of the landscape. A few government buildings in Port-au-Prince are passable, and the city as a whole is not a blemish; yet not to have seen it is to have missed no great aesthetic experience. Elsewhere the towns and villages run the gamut from monotonous small-scale structures to mere collections of shanties. Great gashes have been cut in the forests by generations of earth-hungry peasants who needed farms. Much of the land looks poor; indeed, thousands of once fertile acres are now beyond any use at all, grown up in cactus, because of overuse and misuse for-

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
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merly. Wherever the overcrowded Haitians have lived since 1815, there beauty has had to give way to gnawing necessity which lacked either the imagination or the means to be sightly.

One can stand upon a morne and watch a rain storm rush down the valley, bending the palm trees in its fury, and think Haiti still a magnificent sight. Then one must descend the mountainside past rickety shacks and rocky fields, and the feeling grows that not all the kindly simplicity of the people is enough to lift the country from its dilapidation. As he nears the village, the afternoon scent of roasting coffee will delight him; but then he sees the squalor of village life and is reminded that three million souls are here trying to eke out an existence upon a small area of declining fertility.

Much in Haiti is picturesque if one can keep his mind from wandering to the conditions which lie behind the picturesqueness. Women stride down from the hills with great loads on their heads; aged crones, pipe in mouth, sit perched on the haunches of tiny donkeys with their bulging panniers; the great market square in the town is a scene of noisy confusion with hundreds of women and children, a mixture of smells, thousands of little piles of soap, candy, gewgaws, vegetables, gaping chickens tied together by the feet, shirts, canes, bolts of cloth. All the weary women, however, must trudge back up to their shanties on the mountainside when the market is over. Many of them do not see ten dollars in cash during the year, and their little children, with bellies bulging, give evidence of undernourishment. Without doctors, without even the rudiments of hygiene, they manage somehow to subsist, or else die, frequently of disease which might easily have been prevented.

In Port-au-Prince and a few other towns live enough members of the élite to make one momentarily forget the plight of the masses. The houses of the well-to-do are substantially built, if not often attractive. Their garden walls are brilliant with bougainvillea, their walks with hibiscus. Tiny red lizards (analis) make flashes of color along the walls. On shady verandas and in the parlors one hears delightful conversation, eats excellent food, savors the pleasures of civilization. The clubs of the élite are pleasing, their tennis is good, their dancing graceful. To be among these families as a welcome guest is an experience in gracious hospitality which can never be forgotten. Too soon, however, one must leave these havens of urbanity and pass through districts of the town which haunt the mind with their grim want.